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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: review of mainstreaming in the organizations of the United Nations system

Follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

II. Progress in the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and in mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system

E. Joint work plan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

1. In resolution 39/5 of the Commission on the Status of Women[1] and resolution 1997/43 of the Commission on Human Rights,[2] the Secretary-General was requested to prepare annually a joint work plan for the Centre for Human Rights (now the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) and the Division for the Advancement of Women, which would help to facilitate the mainstreaming of women's human rights, through, *inter alia*, regular intersecretariat cooperation to ensure that the joint work plan of the Centre for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women reflected all aspects of work under way and identified where obstacles/impediments existed and areas for further collaboration, and to inform the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights of the plan at their annual sessions.

1. Assessment of the implementation of the current work plan

2. In the implementation of the current joint work plan (see E/CN.6/1997/2, paras. 40-47), the systematic exchange of information between the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights continued and was expanded in the course of 1997. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women held meetings with the Officer-in-Charge and staff of the then Office of the

* E/CN.6/1998/1.

** For chap. II, sects. A-D, see E/CN.6/1998/2.

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United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights/Centre for Human Rights in July 1997. She also met with the newly appointed United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

3. The exchange of information between the Division and the Office of the High Commissioner regarding the work of the human rights treaty bodies serviced by them continued on a regular basis. Information was provided by the Division to the members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, at the twice-yearly sessions of the Committee and inter-sessionally, on the practices of the other treaty bodies, while a briefing note on the results of the sessions of the Committee was provided to the chairpersons of the other treaty bodies and the concluding observations of the other treaty bodies were made available to the members of the Committee. The Office of the High Commissioner made available to the Committee and to the Commission on the Status of Women the reports of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, as requested by the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women.

4. The Division attended the eighth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies, held at Geneva in September 1997, and provided input into the preliminary analysis of the international human rights treaty system (HRI/MC/1997/MISC.1). A background paper on the relevance of gender to the enjoyment of rights guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was provided by the Division to those members of the Human Rights Committee preparing the first draft of the Committee's revised general comment on article 3 of the Covenant. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women addressed the Human Rights Committee at its fifty-ninth session, in March/April 1997.

5. The Office of the High Commissioner and the Division sought to follow-up the round table of human rights treaty bodies on "Human Rights Approaches to Women's Health, with a Focus on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights", held at Glen Cove, New York, in December 1996, which was a joint endeavour with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The Office of the High Commissioner and the Division for the Advancement of Women were represented at the monthly inter-agency working group meetings convened by UNFPA to develop strategies to implement the Glen Cove recommendations. The Office of the High Commissioner ensured that the question of the human rights implications of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) was included in the agenda of the eighth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies, in accordance with the Glen Cove recommendations.

6. The Office of the High Commissioner provided comments on the annotated comparison of the draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women with the existing United Nations human rights instruments (E/CN.6/1998/7), prepared by the Division. It also provided input into a report for the information of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on ways and means, outlining the technical cooperation programme of the Office of the High Commissioner. The Division participated in a training seminar on reporting under human rights treaties, organized by the Office of the High Commissioner, which was held at Budapest in October 1997. As a result of its participation, the Division developed a training package on reporting to the Committee for States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which will be posted on the Division's Web site.

7. The Office of the High Commissioner participated in the gender mainstreaming workshop (Geneva, September 1997) organized by the Division for members of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) Expert Group on Women in Development. The Office of the High Commissioner also participated in an expert group meeting on the girl child and provided input into the aide-mémoire prepared for that meeting. The meeting, which was organized jointly by the Division, the Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Children's Fund and UNFPA, was held at Addis Ababa from 13 to 17 October 1997. The Office of the High Commissioner provided input into the aide-mémoire prepared for the expert group meeting on gender-based persecution, held at Toronto, Canada, from 9 to 12 November 1997, in which the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the territory of the former Yugoslavia and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan also participated. The Office of the High Commissioner participated in the expert group meeting on women's enjoyment of economic and social rights, organized jointly by the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Institute for Human Rights of Abo Akademi (Turku, Finland, 1-4 December 1997). The Office of the High Commissioner provided input into the background paper prepared by the Division for the meeting. The background paper, with further inputs from both the

Office of the High Commissioner and the Division, served as the basis of the report on women's full enjoyment of their human rights, particularly those relating to economic resources (E/CN.6/1998/11 and E/CN.4/1998/22), prepared jointly by the Office and the Division for the Commission on the Status of Women at its present session and the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-fourth session.

8. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights met with the members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women during the Committee's eighteenth session, in January/February 1998, to exchange views on how to strengthen cooperation between the Committee and the Office of the High Commissioner.

9. In resolution 1996/34, the Economic and Social Council endorsed the revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001, and requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, through the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session, a progress report on the implementation of the revised plan. The Office of the High Commissioner provided substantive input under relevant critical areas of concern for inclusion in the report, which was prepared by the Division (see E/CN.6/1998/3).

10. The technical cooperation programme of the Office of the High Commissioner has prepared a project on the integration of a gender perspective into technical cooperation practices and procedures, which is currently being implemented. The Division for the Advancement of Women has contributed to various phases of the project.

11. The Division has provided the Office of the High Commissioner with a detailed plan of its activities for the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The plan was included in the second edition of the Office's briefing package on the fiftieth anniversary.

12. The exchange of information between the Office of the High Commissioner and the Division was facilitated by expanding cooperation in the development and maintenance of their respective Internet sites and databases. Meetings were held between responsible officers of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Division to ensure synergistic development of the Internet sites and databases, which now allow for fast electronic cross-referencing and easier access to treaty body and other information. However, in order to achieve the systematic transfer of information, the Division and the Office will continue to seek a solution with central electronic data-processing services in New York to overcome the current difficulties in data transmission, including the monitoring of data replication between New York and Geneva. Both the Office and the Division will continue to pursue further cross-linking of new information between their Web sites.

2. Joint work plan for 1998

13. During 1998, the cooperation between the Office of the High Commissioner and the Division on the work of treaty bodies and the preparation of the various optional protocols will continue and be enhanced. The Division will continue the practice of providing briefing notes on the results of the sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and ensure that the chairpersons of treaty bodies continue to receive the concluding comments of the Committee promptly. The Division, in cooperation with the Office, will continue the targeted approach in all human rights activities of the United Nations.

14. The Division will provide further input for the elaboration by the Human Rights Committee of the general comment on article 3 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and will provide input into the elaboration of the general comment on gender in the enjoyment of the rights outlined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Division will also seek to provide input for other general comments prepared or revised by the various treaty bodies.

15. The Division will contribute, on an ad hoc basis and as appropriate, information for reports on human rights issues prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner. For example, it will contribute to and/or provide comments regarding the detailed analytical study comparing the provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,[3] the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,[3] the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,[4] the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,[5] the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment[6] and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,[7] which is being prepared with a view to identifying duplication of reporting required under those instruments (see General Assembly resolution 52/118). The Office will continue to contribute whenever requested and as appropriate to the preparation of reports or studies on gender and women's rights issues.

16. The Division will also provide targeted input into the work of the non-conventional human rights mechanisms. For example, it will provide input into the work of the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and

Protection of Minorities, especially with respect to the work of the Special Rapporteur on systematic rape and sexual slavery during periods of armed conflict and the Special Rapporteur on traditional practices affecting the health of women and children. The Office of the High Commissioner will contribute to the preparation of the report on traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls (see General Assembly resolution 52/99). The Office has provided substantive input for, and will actively participate in, the review of the four critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action directly related to the work of the Office, which is to be undertaken by the Commission on the Status of Women at its present session.

17. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women will seek to establish closer and more functional relations with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Commission on the Status of Women and intends to participate in the work of both the Commission (in a panel on violence against women) and the Committee during 1998. She will seek closer cooperation and increased input from the Division for the Advancement of Women in the preparation of her field missions. In that regard, the Division will facilitate closer collaboration between the Special Rapporteur and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The Division will also provide information to other specific non-conventional human rights mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance.

18. In response to the request of the chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies at their eighth meeting, which was endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 52/118, the Division will prepare a study analysing the practice of the various treaty bodies in integrating a gender perspective into their work. The chairpersons may propose possible lines of action in this regard. The Office of the High Commissioner, in organizing training courses on reporting under human rights treaties, as well as other ad hoc activities, will continue to invite the Division to participate.

19. The Office and the Division will discuss the possibility of a follow-up meeting to the expert group meeting on the integration of gender perspectives into United Nations human rights activities and programmes, which was held at Geneva in 1995 (see E/CN.4/1996/105). The Division will work with the Office to mobilize extrabudgetary resources to permit the convening of a second expert group meeting, which will assess the impact of the first meeting and consider further strategies required to integrate gender perspectives into United Nations human rights activities.

20. The Office will strengthen the integration of a gender perspective into technical cooperation practices and in so doing will continue to seek the active collaboration and expertise of the Division.

21. One of the guiding ideas for the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, under the leadership of the Office of the High Commissioner, is "Women's rights — the responsibility of all". For this important occasion, the Office has developed a tentative programme of activities for implementation by all partners in the United Nations system, including the Division for the Advancement of Women. The contributions of the Division will include close collaboration in the organization of an expert panel, the preparation of a booklet and the development of a page on its Web site on how the Universal Declaration of Human Rights may be interpreted in relation to the rights of women.

22. In December 1997, the Office formed a cross-branch gender and human rights of women team, which will work closely with the Division for the Advancement of Women, drawing on its expertise. The Division and the Office are exploring possible staff exchanges to mutually benefit from in-house expertise.

23. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, within her overall function of facilitating, monitoring and advising the Secretary-General on the overall policy goals of the United Nations with regard to gender analysis and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all United Nations activities, will cooperate closely with the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights in her efforts to mainstream a gender perspective, including the implementation of Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2.[8] The High Commissioner will also provide information and support to the Special Adviser on the general human rights aspects of her work.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 6* (E/1995/26), chap. I, sect. C.

[2] Ibid., *1997, Supplement No. 3* (E/1997/23), chap. II, sect. A.

[3] General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

[4] General Assembly resolution 2106 A (XX), annex.

[5] General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

[6] General Assembly resolution 39/46, annex.

[7] General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex.

[8] A/52/3, chap. IV, sect. A, para. 4.